



# How Victims of Crime and Domestic Violence Survivors in Massachusetts Can Receive Discounted Voice and Data Service through the Federal Lifeline Program

May 2019

For crime victims or domestic violence survivors, a phone can be a lifeline to police protection, emergency service, medical assistance, legal help, and support services and networks. But many lose phone service or have difficulty affording it because of financial disruption, separation, or relocation.

Fortunately, the federal Lifeline program is available to help low-income crime victims or domestic violence survivors obtain or restore access to voice and data service. The Lifeline program currently provides \$9.25 a month towards voice or broadband internet service. Anyone who is financially eligible can receive assistance.

The most popular Lifeline product in Massachusetts is a “free” voice or bundled service provided by a participating wireless company. These companies often provide a free handset and at least 1,000 minutes and/or 2 GB of data a month, all for just the \$9.25 monthly Lifeline support. Consumers can purchase additional minutes or data as needed.



## Who is eligible?

You qualify for Lifeline if you receive

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, once called Food Stamps)
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (for example, Section 8 housing), or
- Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit

You can also qualify for Lifeline by showing your household's annual income is less than [135% of poverty](#). For example, a household of one person in Massachusetts would need to show an annual income at or below \$16,862.

## Which Massachusetts companies participate in Lifeline?

Currently, there are five companies providing Lifeline service in Massachusetts. Note: Companies have to apply to the state of Massachusetts or to the Federal Communications Commission to participate in Lifeline and the list of companies can change over time. The Massachusetts Lifeline providers are, in alphabetical order:

- Global Connections Inc. of America (Lifeline product called [Stand Up Wireless](#))
- Oteleco (formerly [Granby Telephone, LLC.](#))
- Tracfone Wireless (Lifeline products are under the name [Safelink Wireless](#))
- [Verizon Massachusetts](#)
- Virgin Mobile USA, LP (Lifeline products are under the name [Assurance Wireless](#))

**Note:** The Lifeline service can be limited to certain parts of the states, so use this [online tool](#) to identify which Lifeline providers serve your zip code.

## How do I apply?

Consumers in Massachusetts apply for Lifeline service through the Lifeline provider they have selected. Under federal rules, the application process will be changing in the future and this fact sheet will be updated once that change occurs.

## Important Lifeline program rules

- There is only one Lifeline discount allowed per household. If there is more than one Lifeline household at your address (for example, if you are in a shelter that houses more than one family), you will need to fill out an additional form ([one-per-household form](#)) to show that your household is a separate household from the other(s) at your address.
- Wireless Lifeline customers will need to use their Lifeline service at least once every 30 days or you will receive a notice from your carrier that your Lifeline service will be turned off.
- Lifeline customers must annually re-certify they are still eligible for Lifeline service. Failure to complete the annual recertification will result in a loss of Lifeline service. The recertification process is meant to be simple and can be accomplished in many ways, for example by text or by returning a form. In some cases it is automated (for example, the provider will check to see if you are participating in a qualifying program).
- You must notify the company if you are no longer eligible for Lifeline service, for example, because your income has increased above the eligibility guideline.
- You have the right to change your Lifeline provider or service (e.g., from voice to a voice/data bundle) at any time.

## Additional Assistance

- Lifeline consumers should first try to contact their Lifeline provider if there are any problems with their Lifeline service.
- If you are having problems with your Lifeline provider and the company is not helpful, contact the [Consumer Division of the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable](#) at 1-800-392-6066 (open Monday – Friday from 9am to 5pm) or email [consumer.complaints@mass.gov](mailto:consumer.complaints@mass.gov).
- If you have questions about how the Lifeline program works or need help finding a Lifeline provider serving your area, call 1-800-234-9473 from 9am to 9pm daily.